JOHNNY DUNN

by

Robert E. Gard

CHARACTERS:

JOHNNY DUNN
MRS. JOHNNY DUNN
THE NARRATOR
THE PEOPLE OF ALBERTA

SCENE:

Various parts of Alberta, over a period of years.

Down R. is an old rocking-chair. Above it is another chair. Upstage centre can be an arrangement of steps and platforms on which the larger part of the chorus can be grouped. Down L. is a chair in which one of the older women of the chorus sits knitting.

The grouping of the chorus should not be too stiff in its pattern. The younger members who take the parts of the children should sit in front on the floor, eating all-day suckers, playing with a ball, etc. The rest can stand, or sit, on the various levels behind.

The members of the chorus should understand that the chorus as a unit represents a group of characters. Without being too specific in the matters of costume and make-up, each actor should represent an individual character.

The curtains open on an empty stage. Gradually the people of Alberta drift in from both sides, greeting each other, exchanging the time of day, commenting on the weather, crops, household affairs, etc. As they take up their positions, the Narrator comes in from the right, acknowledging greetings, etc.

Mrs. Johnny Dunn follows the Narrator onto the stage. She sits in the rocking-chair and begins to darn a sock. The Narrator leans against the right side of the proscenium and addresses both the chorus and the audience.

NARRATOR: Say, did you ever hear o' Johnny Dunn?

CHORUS: Who was Johnny? Who was Johnny Dunn?

NARRATOR: Well, he was nobody. What you might call, friends, a .... a ..... figment o' th' imagination.

SINGLE VOICE: Whose figment?

NARRATOR: Mine, and Johnny's. Y' see, Johnny was all the imagination in Alberta rolled into one ordinary, run-o'-th'-mill, everyday-garden-variety of ....

SINGLE VOICE: Man?

NARRATOR: Well, sir, I'd call Johnny one percent man and niney-nine percent straight .... liar!

CHORUS: Dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear, dear! (cresendo)

Johnny was a liar, did you hear?

Johnny was a liar! Heaven's above!

SINGLE VOICE: (singing)
Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny Dunn!

NARRATOR: He was a liar, all right. I don't mean a petty, sneakthief liar .... but a real big liar!

CHORUS: Where is Johnny? Johnny Dunn . . .
(Heavy, slow) Up in the North where the big now lies?
(Light) Down in the South where the Chinook blows?
Off in the East by the rising sun?
(Quicker) Or out in the West where the West begun ...

SINGLE VOICE: (singing) Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny Dunn!

NARRATOR: (Calling) Johnny . . . Johnny! Where are you Johnny Dunn?

JOHNNY: (Appearing suddenly from the middle of the chorus and coming down L.) Why, I'm right here. What's th' shoutin' about, boys?

NARRATOR: We were telling folks about you, Johnny. Where've ya been?

JOHNNY: Me? Why, I been every place! Ain't a thing I haven't seen anywhere!

CHORUS: Have you been to Calgary and Okotoks?

SINGLE VOICES: (In rapid succession) High River, Claresholm, Caley, and Macleod?
Boyant, Loyalist, Major, and Throne?
Drumheller, Lethbridge, Vulcan and Hanna?

JOHNNY: (Scornfully) Sure . . . .

CHORUS: Been to Red Deer, Camrose, Wainright, and Czar?

SINGLE VOICES: (As before) Mirror, Three Hills, Jarrow, and Heath?
Edmonton, Westlock, Islay, and Jasper?

ALL: Grouard, Sexsmith, Reno and Peace River?

JOHNNY: I lived in all them places . . . sure.

NARRATOR: How about PONOKA? Johnny?

JOHNNY: (Laughing) I was there for a while,, sure. Completin', you might say, my eddication!

CHORUS; Johnny's been everywhere. He's been all around!
He knows Alberta . . . every foot of the ground.

JOHNNY: Say . . . you folks don't know anything about me! Why, I been a lumberman, rafter, rancher, railroader, trapper, trader, surveyor, storekeeper, lawyer, newspaperman, bootlegger . . .

NARRATOR: But more'n anything, Johnny, you've been a straight, honest-to-goodness liar. You were born to tell the biggest whoppers in the world! Now, Johnny, tell us a tale!

CHORUS: One time Johnny was up in the north;
That was the year that grub was scarce . . .
There wasn't a thing in the camp to eat . . .
The kids were yelling, the dogs were howling . . .

CHORUS AS CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT PITCHES: (light voices in front row) I'm hungry! hungry! hungry . . . hungry, hungry, hungry!

CHORUS AS HOWLING DOGS: (heavy voices coming over childrens' voices from behind)

CHORUS: It was an a-w-f-u-l m-e-s-s -----
Johnny's wife was big and stern
Even her firewood wouldn't burn!
There wasn't a thing in the camp to eat . . .
She lit into Johnny, and she said:

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Git out there, Johnny Dunn, and git me something to eat and don't come back till you get plenty! 'Cause me and th' kids are perishin' away!

CHORUS: Johnny's wife was fit to die . . . .
And Johnny heaved an awful sigh . . . .

JOHNNY: (Sighs loudly)

CHORUS: He got his gun and took to the woods . . .

JOHNNY: I didn't know where I was goin'. I had to get something for my folks to eat. I only had one bullet. I walked, and I walked, and I walked, and I walked, and I walked. I must have walked a hundred miles. Maybe two hundred.

CHORUS: Maybe a th-o-u-s-a-n-d!

JOHNNY: Maybe. Anyway, I was gettin' tired, and it was gettin' on quite late, and dark was settin' in. Suddenly, I came to a river-bed and suddenly I heard . . .

CHORUS: (As ducks quacking faintly, throughout following speech)

JOHNNY: . . .th' sound of ducks feeding! Looking around some willows I found I was on the banks of a small creek . . . in a country new and strange to me. It was a most peculiar stream windin' in a series of regular curves across a wooded plain. I crept closer, and closer, and closer, and pretty soon I saw a big, fat duck feeding just around the second bend. I crawled forward, and saw a third duck feeding in the third bend. Nine ducks were feeding, each one in a bend in the creek! What was I gonna do? I only had one bullet!

CHORUS: Now Johnny put his wits to work
He had to think the problem out!
His kids were waiting there at home,
His wife . . .

JOHNNY'S WIFE: (Faintly as from a great distance) J-O-H-N-N-Y! Bring home plenty to eat!

JOHNNY: Suddenly I saw a way to feed the hungry family waiting for me far away. I dropped to the ground. I carefully surveyed the first bend in the stream, then placing my trusty gun across my knee I bent it to correspond to the bend in the creek. Like this!

SINGLE VOICE: (As creak of gun . . . ↑ (Upward inflection)

JOHNNY: Examining the other bends, I bent the gun barrel this way .

SINGLE VOICE: (Downward inflection Creak!)

JOHNNY: And that . . .

SINGLE VOICE: (Upward Creak!)

JOHNNY: And this way and tha . . .

SINGLE VOICE: (Up and down Creak-creak!)

JOHNNY: Until it was an exact representation of the bends in the stream. Then I went to the level of the water and drew me a bead on that first duck . . .

CHORUS: Pull the trigger, Johnny
Pull it carefully.
If you miss, there won't be no duck
To feed your fam-il-ie!

JOHNNY: I pulled the trigger!

HEAVY MALE VOICE: (B-O-O-M!)

CHORUS: We surely hope he hit the duck, or Johnny's wife'll say:

JOHNNY'S WIFE: (From distance) Johnny Dunn! I'll skin you alive!

JOHNNY: The bullet whistled on its way!

SINGLE VOICE: (Whistles like a spinning bullet)

JOHNNY: It hit the first duck . . .

(The quacks start with a light voice and getting heavier go through to the eighth quack. The ninth quack is again a light voice)

SINGLE VOICE: (In surprised manner) Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the second duck.

SINGLE VOICE: (In different surprised manner) Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the third duck.

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the fourth duck!

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the fifth duck!

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the sixth duck!

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the seventh duck!

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the eighth duck!

SINGLE VOICE: Quack!

JOHNNY: It hit the ninth duck!

SINGLE VOICE: (With a final dying) Quack

CHORUS: A mighty hunter was Johnny Dunn . . .
He killed nine ducks with a crooked gun . . .
He picked up his ducks and went on home
And as he walked he thought;

JOHNNY: That old proverb about "killing two birds with one stone", is greatly out of date.

MUSIC BRIDGE (As Johnny walks slowly across stage to his wife and home a piano plays some simple well known old song. Johnny sits in the chair next to his wife and goes to sleep. The music fades away)

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Johnny! Johnny Dunn!

JOHNNY: (Sleepily) Y-e-a-h?

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Git off of that couch, Johnny Dunn. All them nine ducks are picked white and clean. There ain't a single thing in camp to eat! Them poor kids . . .

CHILDREN: Hungry, hungry, hungry, hungry, hungry, hungry!

JOHNNY'S WIFE: And just listen to that dog!

DOG: (Howling) I'm hungry, too.

JOHNNY'S WIFE: That mutt's so hungry, he's talking about it!

DOG: (Howling) I'm hungry!

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Git out there Johnny, and git plenty of grub!

CHORUS: Here we go again, folks.

JOHNNY: I was really in trouble that time. Some of you older ones may remember that that was the year that game departed from the region around Slave Lake. The squaws foraged for berries in vain, and the kids cried themselves into their last sleep! I walked slowly down to the shores of the lake. When suddenly I heard . . .

CHORUS: (Honking as Wild Geese)

SINGLE MALE VOICE: What's this Johnny, comin' this way?

CHORUS: Why, it's millions of geese. Here's the devil to pay!
You've got no bullets for your gun!
You killed nine ducks with your only one!

JOHNNY: I really felt low! The geese came nearer, and nearer, and nearer. They circled around me. They jeered at me. They mocked me, and then, they flew far out on the lake and began to feed.

CHORUS: P-O-O-R J-o-h-n-n-y!

JOHNNY: But suddenly I got a bright idea. I rushed back to camp. I shouted for everyone to prepare many cords of babiche, each cord with a running noose at one end. While this was being done, I cut a whip-like sapling. The cords were many but light in weight. I fastened them as well as the sapling to my body, rushed toward the lake and dove in!

SINGLE MALE VOICE: (As water) Splash!

JOHNNY: I swam with all my might toward the feeding geese. As I neared them I sank beneath the unsuspecting birds . . .

CHORUS: (Makes sound of bubbles through following speech)

JOHNNY: I unfastened the cords, and with deft fingers, slipped a noose around each pair of legs within reach. Moving this way and that, I secured more, until at last, I had snared as many birds as would provide a feast for half the Indian peoples of the North!

CHORUS: Then up popped Johnny in the midst of the birds!
He slapped the water with his stick.

SINGLE VOICE: Were they surprised.

CHORUS: (Honk as geese) The geese got up and began to fly.
Johnny went with 'em right into the sky.
He drove a thousand wing'd steeds . . .

JOHNNY: More like a million! With cunning born of many weeks of hunger, I steered the flying birds toward my camp many miles distant. As we approached, I gradually hauled in on my lines, and as goose after goose came within reach, I would deal it a great whack with my stick, and it would fall to the length of its cord, thereby acting as a brake. Then, as my lodge, surrounded by surprised, upturned faces loomed into view, I pulled in desperately on the cords securing the remainder of my wing'ed steeds, and smote right and left with my cudgel. Each blow lessened the speed of my flight and as the supporting geese decreased in number, I gradually descended until, with the last few struggling birds, I gently landed on the earth before my tepee! (He comes from L. to R. and sits in his chair)

CHORUS: (Laughing) That was some ride, Johnny!

NARRATOR: A long time ago ... fifty years ago, maybe,
Johnny was homesteadin' up in the Peace River Country.
It was a bitter cold night. The snow was crisp and dry
... still ... it was so still you could hear your shadow's
kneescreak! Johnny's wife said to him:

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Johnny Dunn! I ain't got a speck of flour in the house.
If you want any supper you'll have to go 'cross the valley
and borrey a cup-full of flour from the neighbor.

JOHNNY: Tonight? You mean, tonight, I got to cross that valley?
Why, I'll freeze!

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Git out there, Johnny, and bring me some flour!

CHORUS: Git out there Johnny and bring her some flour.

CHILDREN: We're gettin' hungrier by the hour.

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Might have some flapjaks if you make it back . . .

CHORUS: Put on your snow-shoes. Better take a pack.

JOHNNY: Won't do me any good to take a pack. I'm a-going to freeze
to death anyway. Might as well perish travelling light.

CHORUS: Johnny went out and closed the door.

SINGLE MALE VOICE: SLAM!

CHORUS: What a night and what a chore!
He walked and walked and talked to himself . . . .

JOHNNY: (Coming down left) Old fool woman, sending' me out on the
coldest night of the year ... don't know why I put up with
it a-tall. Going to get me a deevorce, that's what I'm a-
going to do. Won't have the old hag a-shoutin' down my
throat no more. Whew! Mighty cold. Mighty cold!

NARRATOR: Suddenly Johnny heard a sound ... and a mighty mysterious
noise it was . . . seemed to come from way off, yet seemed
to be right near, too . . . a wistful, chillin', mournful
sound . . .

CHORUS: WOLVES HOWLING FAR AWAY.
Know what that was, Johnny?
That's the wolf-pack, Johnny.
They're on your trail, Johnny, Johnny Dunn!
Too bad you didn't bring your gun.
Too bad the snow's too deep to run
As fast as you want to run, Johnny.

JOHNNY: Man! Was I scared! Every time I took a step, I heard . .

SINGLE VOICE: (Wolf Howl)

JOHNNY: And it was comin' closer, and closer, and closer, and closer.

WOLF HOWL REAL CLOSE.

JOHNNY: I began to run. In the deep snow I made mighty quick time,
even if I did have my snowshoes on. The pack was closing
in on me. I could almost feel their breath. I could even
hear them breathing!

CHORUS IN UNISON BREATHING (heavily)

JOHNNY: I knew that I had to do something mighty quick. I was afraid
they had me . . .I was so scared, that I'd been glad to see
my wife again . . Away down ahead of me I saw a lone tree.
It had a single branch sticking out about thirty feet above
the ground. I knew I had to get to that tree.

CHORUS: Hurry up, Johnny Dunn, hurry up!

NARRATOR: Do you think he'll make it, folks?

JOHNNY: I had to make that tree. I ran faster than any man had ever run before. The wolves were snapping at my heels. I put everything I had into a final spirt and jumped! Whew!

NARRATOR: (Laughing) Did you catch that limb that was thirty feet above the ground, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Certainly. I caught it on the way down. I grabbed hold of it, swung myself onto the limb and there I was, safe for the moment.

CHORUS: There was Johnny out on the limb.
I'm glad it was Johnny, and I'm not him!
The wolves sat around, down there below,
And cooled their behinds in the snow . . .

SINGLE VOICE: (Singing) Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny Dunn! !

JOHNNY: There I was up in the tree with a circle of grinning, ravenous wolves down below . . . I looked down at them, and they looked up at me. Pretty soon the first wolf said:

SINGLE MALE VOICE: (The two wolves come out from the group and stand on each side of Johnny. The wolves begin and end each of their speeches with a howl) You might as well come on down, Johnny Dunn. Looks like we got you.

JOHNNY: And I answered right back: You wolves can go home. Because I ain't comin' down. That's definite. Then the second wolf said:

SINGLE MALE VOICE: He's a stubborn old cuss, ain't he?

FIRST WOLF: Sure is. What'll we do to meet this situation, boys?

SECOND WOLF: Guess we might's well lope on our way. Shucks, Johnny Dunn'd be poor eatin' anyhow.

FIRST WOLF: Well, now listen, fellows, I got an idea ... and right now I'm so hungry I could eat a horse and chase its rider.

ALL WOLVES: Me too!

JOHNNY: Well, I sat there in the tree, and I could see the wolves were planning something. They were in a big huddle, all close together and I could hear 'em muttering .....

CHORUS: MUTTER

JOHNNY: But I couldn't hear a thing they were saying' ... and every minute I was getting colder and colder. Pretty soon the first wolf looked up at me and said:

FIRST WOLF: Well, Johnny, we'll be going now. Looks like you won this time. Next time, maybe it'll be different. Congratulations, Johnny! (The wolves go up R.)

JOHNNY: And the wolves began to drift away, one by one. After awhile they were all gone. I was gettin' mighty stiff by this time, and I began to edge in on the limb, toward the tree. I got hold of the trunk and was just beginnin' to slide down, when to my horror I saw ....

CHORUS: Johnny saw the wolves comin' back ....
And two of 'em were carryin' something on their back ...
(Quickly) Johnny jumped again for his seat on the limb,
And the only thing he could think of (pause) was a hymn ..

JOHNNY: Yes, sir! And the name of that hymn was "Throw Out the Lifeline!" Because those wolves, stalkin' so purposeful toward my tree, were carryin' a big beaver betwix 'em!

(The two wolves and the beaver come down to Johnny)

NARRATOR: Now what were they going to do with that beaver, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Do? Man, they were going to have my tree cut down, o' course! They brought that beaver right up to the tree and set him down. Then the first wolf said:

FIRST WOLF: Well, Johnny, guess we out-smarted you this time. Git to work, beaver.

BEAVER FEMALE VOICE: (In high squeak) How d'ye want her to fall, boys?

FIRST WOLF: Don't make no difference. Just hack her down. And the rest o' you fellers, when you git a-hold of Johnny Dunn, be careful. Don't break your teeth. Y'know there's no dentist in the Peace River Country .... yet.

NARRATOR: Well, Johnny, how'd you get out of that awful fix?

JOHNNY: Oh that. <u>That</u> was simple. Just tied my snowshoes on for wings, and flew home to the old woman ... She gave me a goin' over for comin' home without that flour! (Crosses to his chair R.)

JOHNNY'S WIFE: Johnny Dunn ... I'll skin you alive!

MUSIC BRIDGE: (Familiar song on the piano, music fades after a moment or two)

NARRATOR: After this last close-call that Johnny had up in the Peace River Country, he thought maybe he'd better go down south where he'd be a little safer. But doggone it! Johnny was hounded by bad luck everywhere he went, seemed like!

<u>CHORUS:</u> No sooner'd Johnny got to the south
Than he couldn't find a single thing to put in his mouth!

JOHNNY: (Coming down L.) Starvin' that's what we were doin', boys!

<u>CHORUS:</u> Was the coldest winter in the history o' man.
The cattle couldn't find a thing to eat,
In the Pass the snow was forty foot deep!
S-o-m-e w-i-n-t-e-r!
Over at Morley, where the foothills rise,
The snow was almost up to the skies!
When the Indians came to Morley Church,
They tied their horses right onto the steeple!

JOHNNY: And that's no lie. The Injuns'd tie their hosses to the steeple, go down through a snow tunnel to the door o' th' church, git religion, then climb back out, git on their hosses and ride away ... ' course, those hosses wore snowshoes. Well, I saw somethin' had to be done and done fast! So I hitched up to my sleigh, and set off acrost the deep snow for Calgary, sixty miles away.

<u>CHORUS:</u> Calgary was in a bad shape, too ...
Snow was soooooooo deep the mail carrier
Missed Calgary all together and was clean to Cochrane
'Fore he even knew he'd missed the big town ...

JOHNNY: Well, I got hitched up and started. Thought maybe I'd find a little grub in Calgary. Old hoss had mighty rough goin', and when we was about twenty miles out, I looked over my shoulder and saw ...

NARRATOR: Now you know how it is, folks, sometimes out there in the west, you'll see, durin' the' winter, a marvelous sight ... looks like the whole arch o' heaven formin', low down there, just over the tops of the mountains ... they say, 'tis hot air from Vancouver filterin' through the mountain passes ... I dunno ... But if you never seen this sight you want to, right away, 'Cause it's one of the wonders o' the West ...

GIRLS ONLY: (Singing softly) Chinook c-o-m-i-n-g .. Chinook c-o-m-i-n-g chinook c-o-m-i-n-g .. (Speaking) You'll see it before you feel it!

MEN ONLY: It'll come with a Puff! Puff! Puff!

GIRLS ONLY: You'll smell it ... You'll hear it, and then ... It'll be springtime ... for a minute!

JOHNNY: I could see there was a chinook comin' up behind me! I knew what was goin' to happen. I whipped up the old horse. We went fast, and faster, and <u>faster</u>! But the wind was puffin' all around us. The snow was meltin' like magic. I whipped old Pete up again. We were simply flyin' acrost the snow. In fact, we were going the <u>limit</u>. It was a good thing we were, because it was all I could do to keep the <u>front</u> sled runners on the snow.

NARRATOR: How about the back runners, Johnny?

JOHNNY: The back runners, friend, was raisin' up one terrible dust storm!

<u>CHORUS:</u> Don't forget, Johnny, the Indians were at church
They'd tied their horses to the steeple.
What happened to those p-o-o-r horses,
Johnny Dunn?

JOHNNY: Shucks, while the Injuns were in church the Chinook came up and melted all the snow. There were those Injuns inside prayin', and outside, their horses were hanging' down from the steeple, just like Christmas bells,

NARRATOR: Johnny, you are a <u>liar</u>! #

JOHNNY: Yes, sir! That was a <u>cold</u> winter. But it wasn't nothin' compared to another winter we had out here ....

<u>CHORUS</u>: You mean, Johnny ... the <u>winter</u> <u>that</u> <u>never</u> <u>did</u> <u>get</u> <u>cold</u>?

JOHNNY: That's just what I do mean. See some o' you folks lived through it yourselves! Well I was ...

NARRATOR: All right, Johnny, One more story. And don't make it too long, 'cause we can't give folks too much lyin' all at once!

JOHNNY: This ain't a lie, friend, but I'll make it short, anyway. Must've been somewhere 'long in the '80's. It was fall ...

CHORUS: 'Twas fall, but it was mighty warm ....
Trees on the hill was just as green
As memory o' man had ever seen.
Nobody thought o' wearin' a coat.
It was even too hot to kill a shoat!
Ranchers set out in front o' their houses,
An' poured mint juleps into their mouths-ses ...
Just like <u>Kentuck</u> <u>Colonels</u>!

JOHNNY: Yes, sir! My one suit o' winter underwear got plumb et up by the moths <u>that</u> winter! Come December, and no snow. Fact it was gettin' warmer all the time. Some o' the boys put in potatoes ... just to see what'd happen. And one old feller, namely myself, set out a few banana sprouts. They done right well. Pretty soon everybody was sowin' wheat and plantin' garden truck.

NARRATOR: Guess by February those crops were all froze out, eh, Johnny?

JOHNNY: What you talkin' about? 'Course they weren't. Come February, crops was doin' fine! Weather was just like one <u>long</u> Chinook.

CHORUS: Biggest trouble Johnny had
Was ... the skeeters was awful bad.
Hadn't died off like they usually do,
And they were as big as ....

JOHNNY: Big! Whew! And fat. Had to carry baseball bats around with us all the time to fight 'em off. Tell you how big they was. One time I was walkin' along under a big tree and I seen a couple o' skeeters up there with a friend o' mine. First Skeeter was buzzin':

FIRST SKEETER: (Light Girls Voice .... The skeeters buzz before and after each of their speeches, they come down front) Say, shall we eat 'im up here, or shall we carry 'im over there by that cliff?

JOHNNY: And that big second skeeter said:

SECOND SKEETER: (Heavy Girls Voice) Aw, let's eat him right here. If we carry him over yonder, one of them big fellers'll take 'im away from us!

JOHNNY: That's how large them skeeters'd growed. Fat, lazy, and mean!

NARRATOR: And how about the crops, Johnny? Weren't they all burned up by springtime?

JOHNNY: No, sir'. Nobody did any springtime plantin' at all! Winter time stuff was doin' so well!

CHORUS: Midsummer was the big harvest time!

Taters was more'n shoulder high!
Wheat had stems like a willer tree .....
Called for strong men an' quick thinkin'!
The grain was cut with cross-cut saws,
And the straw .....

NARRATOR: What in the world did you do with the straw, Johnny?

JOHNNY: Straw? (Laughing) That straw made fine drainpipes once it got dried out!

NARRATOR: Uh-huh! And what about the potatoes?

JOHNNY: Come September, we set about takin' out the taters!

CHORUS: S-O-M-E J-O-B!

JOHNNY: It was that! Little taters we could lift all right. But the big ones ....

CHORUS: Just heaved 'em out with a crow-bar, and let 'em lay!

JOHNNY: The carrots, o' course, we drawed out o' the ground with a block and tackle. Feller south o' me covered over a coulee for a root house. Had to use a well-sweep for a flail to thresh th' grain! Mighty fair crop! And it was a good thing we had a good crop that summer, 'cause next year there wasn't any summer at all! Why, I recall .....

NARRATOR: (Laughing) That's enough, Johnny! That's plenty! #

CHORUS: Now we've told our story 'bout Johnny Dunn
The biggest liar that ever run ....
If you want to see Johnny, just look aroun'!
You'll find Johnny Dunn in every town!
You'll find him hanging around the farm,
Or telling his tales in the milkin' barn.
Maybe you'll find him in the general store ...
He'd rather tell a tale than do a chore.
But one thing certain 'bout Johnny Dunn,
He'll always be havin' a lot o' fun.

CHORUS: So look Johnny up, folks, get him to talk.
Won't be much trouble. Just tell him you've heard
He had a narrow squeak once, from a b'ar,
Or a mountain lion ... that ought to do the trick!
Goodbye, Johnny ... Goodbye, everyb-o-d-y!
(The chorus drifts off the stage waving good-bye, as the curtains close leaving the Narrator and Johnny in front of them)

NARRATOR: Good-bye everybody. Keep an eye out for Johnny Dunn. He might be livin' right in your home. Last time I heard o' Johnny, he was down High River way where he saved the life of a big wagon. Seems there was ....

JOHNNY: Let me tell it myself. I was drivin' along in my wagon, when suddenly a big rattlesnake struck at the off hoss and hit the wagon tongue. That tongue started to swell, and I had to cut it off mighty quick to save the wagon! Well, I got to go now. I hear the old woman yellin' for me ....

JOHNNY'S WIFE: (From distance) J-o-h-n-n-y! Johnny Dunn! Git on home here and git me somethin' to eat! (Mrs. Johnny Dunn appears between the curtains, takes Johnny by the ear and drags him out of sight)

JOHNNY: See how it is, folks? 'Bye!

NARRATOR: 'Bye, Johnny. 'Bye, everybody! (The Narrator disappears between the curtains)

Note: If desired, Johnny's final "story" can be cut from performance; that is, from the point marked # on page 9 to the point marked # on page 10. In the first broadcast of the play given over the University of Alberta Radio Station, CKUA, on March 22nd, 1944, the shorter version was used. In the first stage presentation of the play, given by the Banff School of Fine Arts on August 23rd, 1944, the complete version was used.